Volume 40 Number 5 May 2011

Lagoon Flyer

Jón Baldur Hlíðberg

Buena Vista Audubon Society

May General Meeting

Wednesday, May 18

The Cactus Wrens of North County

Saving a Threatened Species

with

Colleen Wisinski and Sara Motheral

7 p.m. Social—7:30 p.m. Program

Cactus wrens are a charismatic species. As the largest member of the wren family, they are big, boldly patterned, and somewhat brash in their personalities. Their nests are large, a bit messy, and fairly easy to spot tucked into the protective arms of a large cholla cactus or patch of prickly pear. Their call is described as a low, chugging, unmusical series of clicking or raspy croaking noises. Cactus wrens historically frequented the large cactus patches that grew on the hillsides amidst the coastal sage scrub and mixed chaparral plant communities. The pace of development, however, has taken a toll on the cactus wren population in the North County. One remaining stronghold was the cactus-covered hillsides in San Pasqual Valley east of Escondido, on land within and adjacent to the Wild Animal Park (now known as "Safari Park"). Two years ago, a wildfire swept over these hills. Much of the vegetation burned, and there was great concern for the fate of the cactus wrens.

Colleen Wisinski and Sara Motheral are researchers with the San Diego Zoo Institute for Conservation Research. Their work involves studying the cactus wren population of San Pasqual Valley in the aftermath of the wildfire. We'll hear about the fire's impact on the bird population, how habitat restoration efforts have begun to take hold, and the expectations for the decade ahead. Please join us.

Saturday, May 7

BVAS Spring Birdathon

Spring is here, the birds are flying, and all's well in San Diego. It's time for the 2011 Spring Birdathon! We have so much fun with this event each year, we're not going to change a thing. We have activities specially geared for the dedicated early birders, the later-rising coffee and donut crowd of slightly more casual birders, and the fledgling birders and family groups looking for a no-pressure bird outing. Our morning of birding fun will culminate in a casual get-together at the Nature Center for refreshments, friendly banter, and some special activities for the youngsters. See P. 3 for the Birdathon schedule.

Yellow-breasted Chat —Scott Streit

Wilson's Warbler —V. Murayama

Whichever activity you decide to join in on, an experienced BVAS birding guide will be there to help you find and identify the birds. May is the prime birding month in San Diego County, and exciting birds should be in good supply

This is our traditional **Spring Fundraiser**, so even if you aren't able to join us for the Birdathon, we hope you will participate by sending in your donation to help support the Nature Center and BVAS programs throughout the year. Look for your special envelope in the mail or clip out the donation coupon on P. 4. Thank you for your support.

Enjoy Life—Go Birding with BVAS!

Notes from the Field

The Bluebird Diaries

By Marty Marino

Just before sunset today I stopped at the Encinitas Ranch Golf Course to check three bluebird nest boxes, and I received a really nice surprise. The six blue eggs I had photographed on March 24 had hatched into six great little bluebird babies. The parents were both out hunting for food. I saw one parent return carrying food and entering the nest box to feed its new young. It still is amazing to me how the parents can forage and care for six young until fledged. In former seasons I have observed the parents showing new fledglings how to hunt once they have left the nest. The fledglings learn to quietly hide in leafy trees or bushes to avoid notice from hawks. Many times I have observed a first set of fledglings helping bring food to the nest for their smaller siblings. The demands of making my rounds don't allow me enough time to see if this is a common trait shared by all bluebird families, or a special behavior only used by a portion of the population. There are so many admirable aspects of these bluebirds regarding their agility in flight and skill in foraging.

Editor's Note—BVAS participates in a special bluebird recovery program. We hand-build bluebird houses, install them in promising locales throughout the community, and then regularly check the houses during the breeding season to monitor and record nesting success. Over the last few years, over 50 bluebird houses have been installed at participating golf courses, cemeteries, and parks in North County, with great success!

The bluebirds I monitor seem to appreciate and tolerate us humans as we first supply these bluebird homes, and then regularly open and inspect the occupied nest boxes. Some of the bluebird moms will stay on the eggs or hatched babies as we inspect the inside of their home! Some of the bluebirds I monitor migrate away from their nesting territories when the last set of fledglings are weaned. But so far, each new monitoring season has seen bluebirds returning to previous nest box locations and accepting the cleaned out nest boxes. How they find their way only their creator can probably explain! The folks at the beautiful Encinitas Ranch Golf Course have now asked for help in acquiring and placing owl boxes around the course to help balance the rodent population. That will be our next project.

I have also had good success with bluebird houses set out at San Diequito County Park near Solana Beach and Rancho Santa Fe. I have just recently been given permission to install bluebird houses at Guajome Lake Regional Park (which is a good place to see bluebirds if desired). I am still hoping to get bluebirds to nest at Aviara Golf Course in Carlsbad. Bluebirds seem to live and stay at nearby La Costa Resort Golf Course, so they should have no problem moving into the equally plush surroundings at Aviara.

What a difference a week makes! The upper photo was taken on March 24 and shows six bluebird eggs. On the left, the same nest one week later with six healthy chicks.

—M. Marino

My goal is to help increase our western bluebird population, enabling more people to see and enjoy bluebirds in our community. I very much hope a younger generation will continue this program in the future, helping all our cavity nesting bird friends by placing additional nest boxes in appropriate habitat throughout the North County, and maintaining the nest boxes as needed.

That is one of my great hopes and prayers!

Oceanside Barn Owls

Molly and McGee fans from last year may be interested to know that another pair of barn owls, Mel and Sydney, are now raising five or six little owlets on camera right here in Oceanside. The live stream of video from their owl box can be accessed by googling: members@cox.net/kangarobin/cam-3/htm. It's a hoot!

—Y. Nieves

Special Supplement to the Lagoon Flyer

DANCING WITH OWLS

Shanti Mayberry

Shanti Mayberry has an interesting story to tell. It's about a special encounter she had over several months with a great horned owl that still lives in Crest Canyon, adjacent to her home in Del Mar. This is a story about an interspecies relationship that was born in innocent communion but quickly grew in intensity and passion. Something finally had to give, and the natural order of things has now been restored. But, the poignant and somewhat bittersweet memories persist . . .

Subscribers to the digital edition of the May *Lagoon Flyer* received Shanti's story as a one-page special supplement. It's also available on the BVAS website: www. bvaudubon.org. Would you like to see our digital edition? We'd be glad to e-mail you a copy, complete with the "Dancing with Owls" supplement. Just e-mail your request to: akamauro@cox.net.

Let's Go Birding—Everyone's Welcome!

Whelan Lake Monthly Bird Count

A Birdathon Event

with John Haddock

Saturday—May 7—8 a.m.

Whelan Lake is a reserve with a freshwater lake and riparian edge habitat. **Directions:** I-5 to Hwy. 76 East, left at Douglas and continue to light at North River Rd., left on North River Rd. Meet at the cul-de-sac at the end of the road by the entrance gate. Leader: John Haddock, 760-941-7824.

BVAS Birdathon—Saturday, May 7

(All groups meet at the Nature Center)

6 a.m.—Early Risers. *Join Steve Brad for a quick two-hour blitz of O'side Harbor and beaches before joining up with other Birdathon groups at 8 a.m. at the N.C.*

8 a.m.—Oceanside Hotspots. *Join one of our groups and caravan to a local hotspot for a guided bird survey.*

9 a.m.—Lagoon Tour for Beginners. *Join this guided birding tour of Buena Vista Lagoon, specially geared for new birders and family groups.*

11 a.m.-1 p.m.—Nature Center Open House. *Gather at the Nature Center to share light refreshments, swap stories about our bird sightings, and enjoy family crafts and a treasure hunt for the kids. Bring your bag lunch!*

Crest Canyon & San Dieguito Lagoon

Featured Bird Walk

with Steve Brad

Sunday—May 15—8 a.m.

Crest Canyon is a scenic north-south canyon that empties into San Dieguito Lagoon. The canyon has mature Torrey pines and eucalyptus trees, and the coastal sage scrub will be quite lush. Wildflowers should be in full display.

In addition to the year-round bird residents, we'll be looking for newly arriving migrants. We'll also visit a local home in the canyon where the owner has lived for 40 years. She has a number of bird feeders in her back yard and great views of the nearby trees. At the lagoon, we'll be looking for herons, egrets, gulls, terns and other birds associated with this newly restored estuary.

Editor's Note: While in Crest Canyon, keep an eye out for Shanti's horned owl! (See P. 2)

Directions: From I-5, exit Via de La Valle west, turn left on Jimmy Durante Blvd., drive past fairgrounds, turn left at San Dieguito Dr. Road changes name to Racetrack View Dr. at stop sign. Trailhead is about 100 yards after stop sign. Leader: Steve Brad, 760-633-1639; stevebrad1@earthlink.net

Buena Vista Lagoon Bird Count

with Joan Fountain

Saturday—May 28—8 a.m.

Join the regular monthly bird survey team and get to know the Buena Vista Lagoon. Have the satisfaction of contributing to the ongoing bird database and gaining a better knowledge of the birds of our lagoon. We always record a nice assortment of freshwater wetland and marsh species on this easy-paced excursion. **Directions:** I-5 to I-78 East, take Jefferson St. exit, turn right and make another right turn onto Lagoon View Dr. Leader: Joan Fountain, 760-729-1379.

Basic Birding Class at the Buena Vista Lagoon Landing

with Tom Troy

Saturday—May 28—8:30 a.m.

Novice birders are invited to join our monthly class for some informal, no-pressure birding. We'll share friendly tips and help you build your bird identification skills.

Directions: I-5 to I-78 East. From I-78, take Jefferson St. exit and go right to the light on Jefferson St. Turn right again and make an immediate right turn into the BVL Landing parking lot. Leader: Tom Troy, 760-420-7328.

May Pelagic Bird Trips

Two pelagic trips departing from San Diego in May promise some hard-to-find birds as migration brings them into or close to San Diego waters. As an added bonus, we'll have a great chance of seeing a plethora of big marine mammals, including blue, fin, sei, and humpback whales.

Sat. May 14—Spring Migration Special. A full-day trip aboard Grande to the Nine and Thirty Mile Banks to find seldom-seen-in-San-Diego birds. This is an excellent trip to see an abundance of regular "SoCal" seabirds, plus possibly add some rarer species to your San Diego or California lists. Black-footed albatross is likely (but not guaranteed). For more details: http://www.socalbirding.com/upcomingtrips/sandiegomay142011.html.

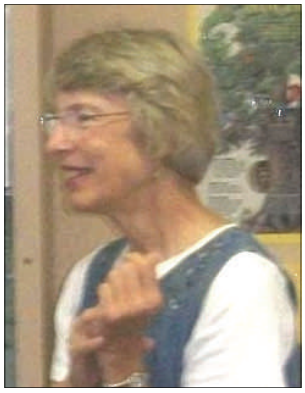
Sat.– Mon., May 28-30—A Memorial Day Weekend trip. Go on a two-night/three-day trip aboard the Searcher, the most luxurious pelagic seabirding vessel in the United States. This trip will venture into deeper waters for three days—dramatically multiplying the number of species we'll see. The focus will be on seabirds and marine mammals between San Diego, San Clemente Island, and the Los Coronados Islands. For more details: http://www.socalbirding.com/upcomingtrips/sandiegomay28302011.html.
VIDEO: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hu2DPpoukuk.

Thank You To A Special Lady

The community that is Buena Vista Audubon is comprised of many good people pitching in and working together on a shared mission. It is a union of kindred souls, and it has accomplished great things. It has been that way for over 50 years now. And while things generally run pretty smoothly at BVAS, over the years certain members have come forward at opportune times to provide that special spark of energy needed to solve a particular problem, develop a wonderful new program, or inspire others to do just a little more. No organization can succeed without those special members, and BVAS has been unusually blessed.

This year, BVAS would like to recognize Mary Ellen Marquand for all she means to each of us personally, to our Nature Center, and to our organization.

It was Petey Tade who first talked with Mary Ellen in 2002 about volunteering at BVAS. Mary Ellen was a natural. She started as a receptionist at the Nature Center, but within a year had found her way onto the board of directors. She attended all the events—general meetings, weekend outings, fundraisers, work parties, special programs—serving on committees and always lending a helping hand. One of her first official tasks was taking over responsibility for coordinating BVAS nature walks, and soon BVAS was offering guided birds walks nearly every weekend of the year. She used her experience as a teacher to help BVAS cater to the particular interests and needs of our youngest visitors. She created the wildly popular Preschool Nature Storytime program in 2003, and has led the monthly program ever since. She took on the demanding role of Volunteer Coordinator, where she recruited, trained, and scheduled receptionists for the Nature Center. For Mary Ellen, that meant ensuring the Center was open six days a week as scheduled, even if she herself had to fill in many times each month when other volunteers couldn't be found. In 2008, she took over the job of directing the Buena Vista Lagoon Nature Camp, overseeing a total of 32 youngsters over a two-week period each summer.



Mary Ellen epitomizes the very best of BVAS. She continues to touch the lives of countless individuals, such as the spellbound and delighted children listening to her stories or working on her crafts, the Nature Center visitors made welcome by her friendly presence and assistance, and the new volunteers who have become a valued part of the BVAS family as a result of her training and gentle encouragement.

Thank you so much, Mary Ellen, for all that you do.

BVAS OFFICERS, BOARD*, AND CHAIRS

President	Dave Billings*	760-753-7925
Vice-President	Dennis Huckabay*	760-757-6437
Secretary	Kathy Billings*	760-753-7925
Treasurer	Sandy McMullen*	760-944-5690
Audubon Adventures	Ruth Gransbery	760-729-2240
Center Manager	Annette Schneider	760-945-8891
Christmas Bird Count	Terry Hunefeld*	760-908-3453
Conservation Co-Chair	Danny DiMento*	858-688-6891
Conservation Co-Chair	Joan Herskowitz*	760-942-5167
Circulation	Lisa Hart	760-945-9601
Education Co-Chair	Ellen Kindsvater	760-433-8097
Education Co-Chair	Nancy Miller	760-704-6479
Facilities/Exhibits	Danny DiMento*	858-688-6891
Field Trips	Andy Brumbaugh	760-434-3334
Field Trip Leader	Steve Brad*	760-633-1639
Gift Shop	Rosalyn Dong	760-806-1430
Library	**—Open Position—**	
Membership	Harvey Hart*	760-945-9601
Native Plant Club	Joan Bockman*	760-433-9401
Native Plant Garden	Joan Bockman*	760-433-9401
Nature Storytime	Mary Ellen Marquand	760-918-6622
Newsletter Editor	Andy Mauro*	E-mail: akamauro@cox.net
Pelagic Birding	Terry Hunefeld*	760-908-3453
Programs	Dennis Huckabay*	760-757-6437
Publicity	Kelly Deveney*	760-721-2441
Ruddy Duck Club	Kelly Deveney*	760-721-2441
Volunteers	Bob Crowell*	760-207-3884
Webmaster	Larry Spann:	E-mail: larry@spannweb.net

Remembering Old Friends

BVAS continues to receive donations in memory of long-time member, **Al Alexander**, who passed away in December.

We were saddened to hear that **Robert Chaney** recently passed away. Robert was on the BVAS board from 1989-95, and held the office of Vice-President.

Location: 2202 South Coast Hwy. Oceanside, CA (East side of street on north shore of lagoon)	**Mailing Address:** P.O. Box 480 Oceanside, CA 92049-0480 **Phone:** 760-439-2473
Hours: Tuesday-Saturday — 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Sunday—1 p.m.-4 p.m. **Closed Monday**	**Website:** www.bvaudubon.org **E-mail:** bvaudubon@sbcglobal.net **Field Trip Hotline:** 760-688-0660

FRIENDS OF BUENA VISTA AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

As a Friend of BVAS, I will receive the chapter newsletter, be invited to special events just for Friends and receive a discount on BVAS Gift Shop purchases. The BVAS Nature Center and its educational programs will receive 100% of my contribution. Minimum donation suggested: $25.

I would like to donate $ 25 ___ $50 ___ $ 100 ___ Other: ___

Send me info about the BVAS Legacy program.: ____

Name_____
Address_____
City, State, Zip _____
Phone_____
E-mail_____
***Send me my newsletter by e-mail.** ☐

Support Your Birdathon!

Did you misplace your Birdathon contribution envelope? Are you just now finding out about BVAS and its wonderful programs? Whatever your situation, please feel free to send in this form with your generous contribution. Thank You!

Please Bill My Credit Card:

Card #_____
CRN_____

Make Checks Payable to:
Buena Vista Audubon Society
P.O. Box 480
Oceanside, CA 92049

Buena Vista Native Plant Club

Sunday, May 15

2 p.m.—Nature Center

A Lawn-Gone Conclusion

Who in your household has to spend precious Saturday mornings mowing that non-native weedy patch you call a lawn? We're sure the idea of just ripping out that grass is a secret dream of whomever wears the lawnmower's hat in your family. Give them their dream! Come to the Native Plant Club meeting in May as we explore the best techniques for lawn replacement, plus exciting alternatives for your yard. There is life after lawn!

The Buena Vista Native Plant club meets at the Nature Center at 2 p.m. on the 3rd Sunday of the month. Visit www.bvauduon.org for more info.

Preschool Nature Storytime

Monday, May 23, 10 a.m.

Do you know who makes that buzzing noise we hear out in the garden? Where do we get that sweet honey we like to put on our biscuits? And did you know you have some busy little friends that live with a queen? We'll read some stories and make some bee-utiful crafts at this month's Storeytime.

If you have any questions about Preschool Nature Storytime, please contact Mary Ellen at 760-918-6622.

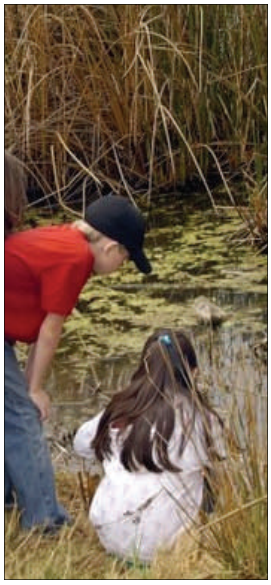
Guest Editor Deluxe

It's nice to have good friends. Suzann Spann took on the mantle of "guest editor" of last month's *Lagoon Flyer*. What's remarkable is that, whenever asked, Suzann does this job so graciously and adeptly, all from her home in Texas, where she and husband Larry (our BVAS webmaster) reside after their move from Oceanside several years ago.

Thank you, Suzann!

A Dipper Day at Kern River

Our April trip to Kern River netted two key target birds—an American dipper and Le Conte's thrasher. Sightings and songs of an impressive list of birds, and lush fields of wildflowers delighted us on our three-day field trip to the Audubon Kern River Preserve. After tracking down the elusive dipper, the group was treated to a wonderful dinner at the Kern County home of BVAS friends Doug and Beth Schanzenbach. *—Andy Brumbaugh*



Sign-up Now for Summer Fun at the Nature Center

Buena Vista Lagoon Nature Camp

Camp Crawdad: ***Ages 7-8; June 20-24; 9 a.m.-noon***

Camp Tadpole: ***Ages 5-6; June 27-Jul. 1; 9 a.m.-noon***

Camp fee: $85/child for each five-day session

**Walks & Talks* **Plants & Animals*
**Crafts & Games* **Music & Stories*
**Indian Lore* **Fun & Fascination*

Drop by the Nature Center or visit the BVAS website (bvaudubon.org) for applications or more information.

Saturday, May 7

2011 Birdathon!

Lagoon Flyer

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Quick Calendar for May

Mon. May 2—Nature Guides Meeting—10 a.m.

Fri. May 6 —Board Meeting—9 a.m.

Sat. May 7—2011 BVAS Birdathon—6 a.m./8 a.m./9 a.m.

Sat. May 7—Nature Center Open House—11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Sat. May 7—Whelan Lake Bird Walk—8 a.m.

Sat. May 14—Pelagic Birding All-Day Boat Trip—8 a.m.

Sun. May 15—Native Plant Club Meeting—2 p.m.

Wed. May 18—General Meeting—7 p.m.

Mon. May 23—Nature Storytime—10 a.m.

Sat./Mon. May 28-30—Memorial Weekend Pelagic Trip

Sat. May 28—Buena Vista Lagoon Count—8 a.m.

Sat. May 28—Basic Birding at B.V. L. Landing—8:30 a.m.

Printed on Recycled Paper

New Families in Residence

This sweet little birdhouse was purchased by Yvonne Fisher at the BVAS Birdhouse Auction in February. Yvonne placed it in an orange tree in her backyard and a pair of house finches quickly moved in to set up housekeeping. After the initial flurry of courtship and nest-building, the action has settled down while incubation of the eggs takes place.

Who can forget this wine-cork wren house crafted by George Hedjuk and purchased at the auction by Sandy McMullen? A male house wren eagerly stuffed this bird house full of twigs, much to the delight of a cute little she-wren in the neighborhood. Little cheeps are expected soon!

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Thank you for your support.

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Enjoy Life—Go Birding with BVAS!

BUENA VISTA AUDUBON SOCIETY
Lagoon Flyer **—Special Supplement—** **May, 2011**

DANCING WITH OWLS

By Shanti Mayberry

One early spring afternoon, I was in my garden studio in our backyard that borders Crest Canyon in Del Mar, when I suddenly felt I was being watched. A shiver went up my spine as I grabbed my binoculars and scanned the canyon trees to find the creature whose presence I felt so strongly.

When I focused on the flowering eucalyptus forty feet away, there was a great-horned owl staring back at me. He was only slightly hidden by the canopy of leaves and seemed pleased to have caught my eye, since he proudly ruffled his feathers as if to magnetize my admiration. Our eyes locked and we entered into a deep communion, as lovers might to say things that are beyond words.

Held by the power of the moment and the owl's gaze, I was amazed to feel such inter-species love. I had seen the owl on several occasions during his twilight time of hunting, and heard him converse with his lady owl at night, but I had never seen him in full daylight. I didn't question our connection or withdraw in fear, even though I sensed I might be crossing a shamanic threshold. Our visual communion went on for at least ten minutes in stillness, except for his periodic chest thrusting and feather ruffling. Was he flirting with me, I wondered? Does he find me, a human female with no feathers, attractive? I longed to know the answers.

Perhaps he felt my willingness to deepen our relationship, for he now flew to the enormous eucalyptus tree that arches over my writing studio. With the afternoon sun backlighting his feathers, I could see how brilliant they were—bronze, gold, charcoal, tan. He was huge, handsome, and I was in love with him. Then he really started coming on to me—flapping his wings and hooting softly. I hooted back. We continued singing to each other in this way for another ten minutes. I was spellbound, entranced and shocked that I was having an owl love affair, but I didn't want it to stop. At that moment my phone rang. The loud marimba ring sound startled us both and the owl flew away to safety. I was devastated that the human world had intruded on us and disturbed our budding romance.

Every day after that initial encounter, I went to my studio at the same time to look for him. I could always spot him hidden in one of the nearby canyon trees. Our daily rendezvous was the most important part of my life and I longed for more intimacy. Finally, he granted my desire.

Our relationship culminated at noon, a month after it had begun, when he perched on a small tree about fifteen feet away from my studio. We began with our usual eye contact,

My great-horned owl and his mate *—S. Mayberry*

chest thrusting and hooting, but this time it became much more vigorous. He was teaching me to dance with him and I think it was his way of courting me. I felt wild and unashamed as if some primal knowing in my body connected us in this ecstatic ritual. Before any serious shape-shifting could occur however, my human husband appeared on the scene, astonished by my gyrations and the close presence of the owl. The lady owl also appeared on a nearby tree, hooting out her disapproval of these courtship dances. My beloved partner flew away to join her.

Through my binoculars, I sadly witnessed what then occurred between the two owls. The female furiously pecked away at her mate, screaming at him for such unfaithful behavior, chased him back and forth on the tree limb, pecking and screaming, until finally they both turned their backs to my view and went pooh.

Alas, I knew my affair was over. From then on whenever I looked for my dear owl, his wife was always by his side, as shown in the photo on this page. I called a local park ranger to find out if it was a known behavior for a large wild bird to bond with a human female and discovered that it does happen, but that it makes the bird's mate jealous.

Although I have had many close encounters with wild creatures, none has been so prolonged or intimate as the one with my majestic owl. Sometimes, even now, he will fly over my studio on his evening hunting rounds, softly hooting in the moonlight. I know he still lives in the canyon preserve and will live forever in my heart.

—Shanti Mayberry is an EcoPsychologist and counselor, with a goal of helping her clients reconnect with nature..